

**DRAM SHOP**  
**INTERVENING WITH THE INTOXICATED PERSON**

**PURPOSE:** This Operating Guide outlines how to handle difficult situations when intervening with an intoxicated person.

**SCOPE:** This guide applies to all employees involved in selling and serving alcoholic beverages.

**GENERAL:** Handling a person who has been drinking too much is often a difficult situation for the intervener. The drinker's mood may range from severe depression to violence. Single encounters with intoxicated individuals are usually not appropriate times for confronting them about their drinking behavior. The situation must be handled carefully in order not to escalate the encounter. The following is guidance to help you handle the situation.

**GUIDANCE:** The following are some suggestions for handling difficult situations:

- ★ Do not show anxiety, fear, anger, etc. These emotions tend to transfer to others.
- ★ Do not get into a shouting match. Keep your statements simple and direct.
- ★ Do not take statements personally.
- ★ Use "I" messages. Deal with the issues at hand. Do not let the person sidetrack you with unrelated issues
- ★ Be directive, but not authoritarian. Present positive alternatives. Show respect, but define your limits -- and stick to them.
- ★ Be aware of possible aggression. Try to get the person seated. Try to distract the person from the source of anger. If you need help -- GET IT.
- ★ If the person is depressed, be as supportive as possible. Be positive in statements. Suggest alternatives.
- ★ Avoid touching anyone without an explanation. If a person attacks you, use only enough force to restrain the person, and get the person to a different location.
- ★ Aggression is more likely to occur when a person becomes extremely intoxicated. It is best to cut off service to a person at an earlier stage. This can be done by limiting the number of drinks a person has.

During a confrontation with an intoxicated person, you can;

- ★ Establish clearly what the problem behavior is and document it.
- ★ Be ready to cope with the customer's resistance.
- ★ Be honest, firm, and consistent.
- ★ Offer the person a choice.
- ★ Monitor subsequent behavior.

Offering the customer a choice allows the person to feel some control in the situation and "save face." Among the alternatives you can offer are:

- ★ Switching to a non-alcoholic beverage (from gin & tonic to straight tonic, coffee, fruit juice, etc.)
- ★ Having food along with a non-alcoholic beverage.
- ★ Taking a break, playing a game, dancing.

**SUMMARY:** You can demonstrate your concern for a customer even when you refuse service or request that the person leave. Often an intoxicated person's companions can help resolve a conflict, especially if they sense your concern and share it. Calling a cab or arranging for a ride, making sure that the person will not be driving, is a way of expressing concern. Throwing out a person who is intoxicated and creating problems is not a satisfactory solution because you may be letting a dangerously angry and intoxicated person loose on the streets or highways. If you are not able to handle the problem customer alone, you should have procedures for getting help from other staff members. In any situation management should be involved and every action taken documented to protect Air Force assets.